

## Deuteronomy 5:28-33

Dr. Steven R. Cook

The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me [displaying His omniscience], and the LORD said to me, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken [approving of their words].<sup>29</sup> Oh that they had such a heart in them [in agreement with their words], that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always [and not just in the moment], that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! [that blessing might last]<sup>30</sup> Go, say to them, ‘Return to your tents.’ [accommodating their request to leave God’s presence at Mount Sinai]<sup>31</sup> But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them [God spoke through Moses to reveal His Law], that they may observe *them* in the land which I give them to possess [God’s Law was to be executed in everyday life].”<sup>32</sup> “So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you [abiding by His Law]; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left [i.e. not deviate by adopting other law codes].<sup>33</sup> “You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you [the walk of righteousness], that you may live and that it may be well with you [i.e., live a blessed life as God intended], and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which you will possess.

### Summary:

The main point of this pericope is that God granted the Israelite’s request to leave Mount Sinai because they were afraid of Him, and afterward to speak His laws through Moses, that His people would have an objective basis for right living and blessing. Moses opens this pericope, saying, “The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken’” (Deut 5:28). God, because He is omniscient, heard the words of His people to Moses and affirmed their comments. But honest and good words spoken in the moment may not carry into the future. God knew His people and He desired their best. However, He also hinted at their future failings when He said, “Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” (Deut 5:29). As discussed from previous lessons, we realize that at the heart of every problem is the problem of the heart. A heart that respects God will manifest itself in obedience to His commands. But a heart that loves self, or the world, will not regard God or His will, but will turn away from Him. This is not only the basis for instability, but harm to self and others. Warren Wiersbe writes:

Obedience is always a matter of the heart, and if we love the Lord, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21–24). There’s no conflict between the greatness

of God and the grace of God, His transcendence and His immanence; for we can love the Lord and fear the Lord with the same heart (Pss 2:10–12; 34:8–9). The fear of the Lord is a major theme in Deuteronomy (Deut 6:2, 13, 24; 10:20; 14:23; 17:19; 31:12), but so is the love of God for us (Deut 7:7; 10:15; 23:5) as well as our love for Him (Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20).<sup>1</sup>

God told Moses, “Go, say to them, ‘Return to your tents. But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I give them to possess” (Deut 5:30-31). God did not force His people to stay at Mount Sinai. They were afraid they’d die if they remained, so the Lord granted their request. Though God wants to reveal Himself to us, sometimes in powerful ways, He will not force us to experience Him beyond what we’re willing to accept, even though it may mean we’re forfeiting the blessing that otherwise would come. The people had asked Moses to be their mediator, and God granted their request. All the remaining laws God had for His people would be given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and as Israel’s loving shepherd, he would write them down for their benefit. Moses then told his people, “So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which you will possess” (Deut 5:32-33). To “observe” God’s Law meant Israel was to know its content, and to “walk in the way” meant they were to live as God commanded. If they did this, it would “be well” with them and they would “prolong” their days in the land of Canaan. Blessing is associated with obedience. Though we are Christians living in a different dispensation under the “Law of Christ” (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2), there is much for us to learn here about God. Warren Wiersbe writes:

Even though God’s children live under grace and not under the Mosaic Law (Rom 6:14; Gal 5:1), it’s important for us to know the Law of God so that we might better know the God of the Law and please Him. Christ has fulfilled the types and symbols found in the Law, so we no longer practice the Old Testament rituals as Israel did. Christ bore the curse of the Law on the cross (Gal 3:10–13) so that we need not fear judgment (Rom 8:1). But the moral law still stands and God still judges sin. It’s as wrong today to lie, steal, commit adultery, and murder as it was when Moses received the tables of the Law at Mount Sinai. In fact, it’s worse, because we have today the full revelation of God’s will through Jesus Christ, and we sin against a flood of light.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1999), 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–41.